

Module: T - GROW

Module in Communication Skills for Supervisors

Introducing coaching – the basics

Coaching is widely used as a professional development tool to support people to make change, build confidence, enhance performance, deal with challenge, grow potential and achieve goals.

Coaching is based on the principle that the person being coached already has everything within them that they need to be able to move forward. Rather than telling, advising, or instructing, the coach's role is to support goal setting, ask open / effective questions and to listen fully, following the agenda of the person being coached, with unconditional positive regard.

This toolkit is not intended to train trainers to become coaches. However, using this approach and the T - GROW model outlined below can create a simple framework for a conversation with a trainee where goal-setting and problem-solving are required.

The T - GROW model

Sir John Whitmore was one of the early pioneers of bringing coaching into the world of work. He stated that ***the purpose of coaching is to raise awareness and responsibility in the person being coached***¹.

To support this, he developed a simple model to structure coaching conversations. He called this model the GROW model. The T is often used as well, and we include it here:



Benefits of using the T - GROW model

Some benefits of using T - GROW:

- It supports someone to think through their current situation and what they have tried already to address it. This can be easily overlooked in the desire to find solutions and yet it paves the way for new thinking.
- It creates a simple structure for a conversation where there isn't much time and a way forward needs to be identified.
- It is solution-focused
- It helps someone to think through a range of options

- It pins people down to committing to actions and timescales where relevant.
- It is flexible – the conversation does not have to flow in the order of the model.
- It facilitates the thinking of the person to find their own solutions which are far more likely to lead to action than those suggested by someone else.

Trainer Exercise 1:

Note down your responses to the following questions which are based on the T - GROW model. Not all questions might be relevant for you. Use those that are and move on when appropriate. Give yourself some space to think if you can.

T – Topic

- What would you like to focus on here? Think of an area you are finding challenging at the moment or something you would like to change.

G – Goal

- (For the topic)
- What do you want to achieve in relation to this area?
- What do you want to change?
- What will be different and how will you and / or others know?
- (For this exercise)
- How far would you like to get today?
- Ideally what would you like from doing this exercise?

R – Reality

- What is the current situation?
- What is it like for you?
- What have you tried already to address this?
- What has worked?
- What hasn't worked?
- What obstacles do you face?
- What do you have control over?
- If nothing changes, what would that be like for you?
- How willing are you to make a change?

O - Options

- What options do you have?
- And what other options do you have?
- What's the simplest thing you could do?
- What else is possible here?
- If you could choose to take only one step, what would it be?
- Who could support you with this?
- What or who could you influence?
- What resources do you have?

W – Way forward / When / Will / Who

- What's one simple step you could take to move you forward?
- When could you take that step?
- By when will you do this?
- What could stop you?
- How can you overcome this?
- Who will you ask to support you with this?
- How will you celebrate or acknowledge taking this step?

Trainer reflections:

1. What was it like to go through the model?
2. How could you use this in your work with trainees?

More T - GROW questions to use with trainees

You can use all of the questions from the exercise above. Here are some more examples.

Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's on your mind today? • What would you like to talk about today?
Reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you feeling about this today? • Who else is involved? • What part are you playing in keeping things the way they are? • What might you gain by making a change?
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies could you try? • What might it be like to take that first step? • What could you say yes to? • What could you say no to? • How far are you prepared to go? • What do you need to let go of to move forward? • How could you see things differently here? • If you were them, how might you see things?
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you willing to commit to? • Who will you tell? • Who can hold you to account for this? • By when will this be completed?

When to use the TGROW model

The TGROW model can be used as a structure for a conversation with trainees who are dealing with a specific challenge or issue they want to address or change with some structured thinking time.

It is a great way to explore obstacles and blocks to progress on any issue.

It can be used as a way to set goals and identify how the trainee could move forward.

It can also be a useful way to develop a simple action plan.

Trainer tip

The model provides a structure for a conversation, but it does not have to be used in chronological order every time. In practice a conversation will often move back and forth between reality and options. Someone might identify specific steps related to one aspect of a situation and then go back into reality on something else.

Hold the model lightly and think of it as a framework you can use.

Trainer exercise to take away

Try one T - GROW conversation this week and reflect on how it went with a colleague.

Further reading and resources:

1. Nancy Kline, *Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind*, (Updated Sept 2002) (First published by Cassell Illustrated 1999)
2. Sir John Whitmore, *Coaching for Performance*, Nicolas Brealey Publishing, (25th anniversary edition 2017.) (First published 2002)